Specialist Review of Categorically Excluded Project

Project: Pine Horse Valley Hazard Tree Removal
Exclusion Category:_ 36 CFR 220.6(e)(17) & 36CFR 220.6 (e)(5)

Reviewer's Field(s) of Expertise:____Fisheries_____

Checklist of Extraordinary Circumstances[1]
(FSH 1909.15 – 30.3 (2))

Resource Condition	1. Not within my area of expertise	2. Project has no potentially significant impacts.	3. Project is ok with attached management requirements.	4. Project has unavoidable, potential significant impacts.
a. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat or Forest Service sensitive species.		x		
b. Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.	x			
c. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas.	x			
d. Inventoried roadless areas.	x			
e. Research Natural Areas.	x			
f. American Indian or Alaska Native religious or cultural sites.	x			
g. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.	x			

[1] The mere presence of one or more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion. If the project, *including all design features*, would have a low degree of potential effects on these resource conditions, then we consider it to be appropriately covered by categorical exclusion. For example, a salvage sale may involve road construction and timber harvest in an area which has several archaeological sites. If the project is designed to avoid locating roads or salvage units on any sites, we consider there to be no potentially significant effects on archaeological sites. This is because, even though road building and yarding activities can obviously impact sites, we have designed the project to prevent such activities from occurring on them.

Direct and Indirect Effects

ESA

The Action area is located amongst drainages that flow into the Eel River below Scott dam and is in the geographic range for the CC Chinook salmon ESU, SONCC Coho salmon ESU, NC Steelhead DPS, and critical habitat for SONCC Coho salmon. These species and associated critical habitat are found approximately 2 miles downstream of the project area. No suitable habitat is located directly within or adjacent to the project area. As mentioned previously, due to the distance from the project, the limited size of the project, the location of the project (adjacent to roads that only cross ephemeral and intermittent drainages) and associated BMPs (listed below), we are anticipating little to no negative effects to these species and associated critical habitat. Therefore, it is my determination that the Pine Horse Valley Hazard Tree Removal Project will have "No Effect" on the CC Chinook salmon ESU, SONCC Coho ESU, NC Steelhead DPS and critical habitat for SONCC Coho salmon.

Forest Service Sensitive

The project area is within the elevation and geographic range of the Pacific lamprey and Western Brook Lamprey, however only a small amount of acres within this species watershed (2004) may be impacted by this project, and the species would not be present during implementation; therefore, it is my determination that the Pine Horse Valley Project will not affect the Pacific lamprey or the Western Brook Lamprey.

There would be no effects to the Clear Lake hitch or Hardhead (both FS Sensitive species) since the project area is outside of their range.

Management Indicator Species

The project is generally well removed and buffered from rainbow trout habitat. Resident rainbow trout are documented to occur in Bucknell and Benmore Creeks downstream of the project areas. This species is a resident version of steelhead, but is not protected under the ESA. The project is not anticipated to have negative effects on the rainbow trout or its habitat as the project, because of BMPs, design features location (ridge tops crossing only intermittent and ephemeral drainages and along roads) and size would have no detectable effects. Thus there would be no direct or indirect or cumulative effects from removal of road side hazard trees and associated fuel reduction projects on the rainbow trout.

Joshua Abel	07/12/2019
Reviewer	Date